

### A SAFE AND EFFECTIVE POLITY.

We are sanguine in the belief that if the Protestant denominations ever find a common platform on which they can stand, it will be a structure modeled after one of two very distinct patterns. It is possible that formalism and rationalism in its many phases will become dominant, in which case the churches will become ritualistic, will emphasize ceremonialism in worship and government, and will therefore adopt prelacy with its elaborate equipment and display. On the other hand, evangelical standards may receive increasing emphasis, so that the type of religious organization which is best suited to evangelistic aggressiveness will be adopted, which would mean a simple, compact, symmetrical, efficient form of representative government, such as we conceive our Presbyterian system to be.

There are clear and increasing evidences, just now, of convergence toward this system as a center. "The Presbyterian" of Philadelphia says there is "a decided movement within the Congregational Churches toward a mutual dependency which is hardly to be distinguished from Scriptural Presbytery." It quotes "The Advance," a leading Congregationalist paper as saying: "From the meeting of the English and Welsh Congregationalists, to the conferences on our Pacific Coast, the polity of the denomination has been given a searching re-examination. The English brethren seem largely of the opinion that there has been too much independency." The "Christian World" (Congregationalist), advocates the "rejection of the idea of an unbridled Independency," and says: "It is quite time the idea was given up. There is assuredly no warrant for it in Scripture." "The Advance" further says: "The prevalence of a similar distrust of absolute independence among our American Congregational churches is becoming increasingly apparent. There is a growing feeling that the old independency has left something out which an aggressive denomination needs." A speaker at the Illinois State Association is quoted as saying: "Individuals without representation are only a mass or a mob, but with representation they became an orderly and efficient government."

On the other hand, the editor of the St. Louis "Christian Advocate," in writing of a tour through eight States, says: "We were a little startled to hear such a free expression of sentiment in favor of electing bishops of our next general conference for a term of eight years, without eligibility to a second term." Commenting on this the "Western Methodist" says: "It is no surprise to us. In our intimate association with hundreds of ministers and thousands of laymen, we have discovered that the opinion is almost unanimous that life tenure should be abolished, and a term of eight years, with privilege of re-election, or twelve years without eligibility for re-election, should be adopted." In accounting for this almost unanimous sentiment the editor says it is because of "the conviction that the bishops should be simply officers, and after a term involving the best period of efficiency, should return to the ranks as other men." "Then, too, the name 'Bishop' is used by our enemies to associate us with Romanism, prelacy and ecclesiasticism."

Thus we find in the Methodist church a strong tendency to adopt measures which will relieve the

Church of the appearance of a prelatical order and will restrain prelatical tendencies by asserting and demonstrating the parity of the ministry; while in the Congregational Church there is a growing sentiment in favor of administering the affairs of the Church by means of a representative form of government.

The Presbyterian polity is the historic form which most completely guards against "one-man power," or ecclesiastical monarchy, on the one hand, and against individualism, or the lack of ecclesiastical unity on the other. It is clearly the form which is outlined in the Scriptures both in the Old Testament and in the New.

### IN THE MIDST OF THE CANDLESTICKS.

There was a great contrast between the condition of John on Patmos and the visions of heavenly things given him; "a prisoner for the testimony of Jesus Christ," in solitude and darkness and harsh treatment, probably in a cell in an old mine to be seen to this day, and the great and glorious visions and prophecies which are the wonder and study of all the Christian ages. Scholars have pointed out that the images of the Apocalypse are derived, not from history, nor classic poetry, nor any creative imagination, but from the Old Testament, the memories of things and scenes in the Jewish religion.

One of the chief glories of the Temple was the Golden Candlestick. It was of pure gold of beaten work, an upright shaft with seven branches. It was in itself complete and beautiful, and from it radiated the light that illuminated all the sacred courts, all the service of the priest and the worship of the people. If the Shew-bread was Christ, the bread of life, constant, abundant, needful, free; then the light of the candlestick was the illumination of the Spirit, making all things open and clear and beautiful in the House of God.

In the vision of the Apostle John the golden candlestick became seven, meaning the whole church of Christ, which is one and many. And in the midst of the seven there walked a living person, "one like unto a son of man," who was both Priest and King, in majesty and beauty. It is Christ the Royal Priest present and active in the midst of His churches. It is not only declared that "He holdeth the seven stars," the ministry of light and love, in His right hand," but "He walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks." Wherever His church is there is the King and the Priest. "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." He is present and active, preserving the union between Himself and the churches, and supplying the lamp with the oil which is His Spirit.

He is present to keep His promises and to hear the prayers of His people. He is in the midst of His churches to supply their wants and bestow gifts and grant "the grace which is sufficient." He makes His churches to be glorious places, so unlike the world without, so bright with the light and beauty of heaven. What a gracious assurance it is! Unto the churches in this present evil world, there is revealed and promised, a present Saviour, both Priest and King, in His life and love, His activity and energy. There is His watchful care, His abiding presence, His open ear, His abundance of grace.